ON THE COVER:
CHIEF DR. ROBERT JOSEPH,
GWAWAENUK FIRST NATION

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SION FROM RECONCILIATION CANADA.
“Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

- Chief Dr. Robert Joseph
  Gwawaenuk First Nation

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Reconciliation Dialogue Workshops is to provide an opportunity for participants to discuss issues related to reconciliation, explore our shared history, the intergenerational impacts of Indian Residential Schools and take positive steps towards honouring diversity and building resilience. These sessions bring diverse participants together in a safe environment that allows for meaningful dialogue and relationship building. It is an opportunity for sharing stories of resilience, gaining a greater understanding of our shared history and exploring pathways to reconciliation including the development of concrete action plans.

Reconciliation Canada uses a Circle process to conduct its reconciliation workshops. It is intended to be absolutely inclusive, respectful and safe. All participants have equal opportunity to speak and to be heard while also committing to listening to others. In short, one has to bring his or her “highest self” and highest consciousness to the process. From an Aboriginal perspective, this way of being is one way to work towards reconciliation. As our dialogues unfold we begin to identify our commonalities and differences and a deeper understanding among us begins to emerge that creates a solid foundation for building meaningful relationships.
ABOUT RECONCILIATION CANADA

Born from the vision of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Gwawaenuk Elder, Reconciliation Canada is a charitable non-partisan, community-based initiative that promotes reconciliation by building new relationships among Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians — relationships built on a foundation of openness, dignity, understanding and hope. Reconciliation Canada is an Aboriginal-led initiative that actively engages multi-faith and multi-cultural communities. Reconciliation Canada is formed as collaboration between Tides Canada Initiatives (TCI) Society and the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS).

Reconciliation Canada began in September 2012 with a bold vision to promote reconciliation by engaging Canadians in dialogue that revitalizes the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians in order to build vibrant, resilient and sustainable communities.

OUR SHARED HISTORY

History and Impacts of Indian Residential Schools

Includes excerpts from The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (“TRC”) website.

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The Government of Residential schools for Aboriginal people in Canada date back to the 1870s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

Canada adopted a policy of forced assimilation to “kill the Indian in the child”. Children were often forcibly removed against their parent’s wishes, some as young as five, to attend these schools. Families who resisted faced fines or jail time. Children often did not see their parents for years at a time and many children were forced to attend these schools to the age of eighteen. More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools. Many were forbidden to speak their language, interact with siblings and practice their own culture. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse was common (90 – 100%) and many experienced severe neglect.

The schools were chronically underfunded and conditions were poor with generally inadequate food, clothing, facilities, staff and medical treatment. Mortality rates at some schools were as high as sixty percent. In 1909, Dr. Peter Bryce, general medical superintendent for the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), reported that between 1894 and 1908, mortality rates at residential schools in Western Canada ranged from 30% to 60% over five years (that is, five years after entry, 30% to 60% of students had died, or 6–12% per annum). In many schools the focus on education was minimal and students spent the majority of their time doing manual labour.

IMPACTS OF INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

When students returned to their communities, they often found they didn’t belong. They were not connected to their culture and were ashamed of their heritage as a result of the racism and cultural superiority experienced at the schools. The substandard education many students received did not adequately prepare them to function in an urban setting either. Students were separated from their families and communities and were deprived of the experience of growing up in a nurturing family. As a result, the residential schools undermined the ability of many students to adequately parent their own children. The abuse and neglect they suffered while at residential school left its mark on their adult...
lives, as well as the lives of their descendants whose families have been characterized by further abuse and neglect.

For most former students, the traumatic experiences of residential schools were passed on to the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The ongoing impact of this multi-generational trauma has contributed to social problems that continue to exist today.

Ongoing impacts faced by intergenerational survivors include:

1. Alcohol and drug abuse
2. Sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse
3. Dysfunctional families and interpersonal relationships
4. Toxic communication — backbiting, gossip, criticism, put downs, personal attacks, sarcasm, secrets, etc
5. Educational blocks — aversions to formal learning programs that seem “too much like school,” fear of failure, self-sabotage, psychologically-based learning disabilities
6. Suicide
7. Destruction of social support networks (the cultural safety net) that individuals and families in trouble could rely upon
8. Voicelessness — entailing a passive acceptance of powerlessness within community life and a loss of traditional governance processes that enabled individuals to have a significant influence in shaping community affairs (related to the psychological need of a sense of agency, i.e. of being able to influence and shape the world one lives in, as opposed to passively accepting whatever comes and feeling powerless to change it.)
Reconciliation Dialogue Workshops aim to provide an opportunity for participants to explore our shared history while taking positive steps towards honouring diversity and building resilience. Our goal in this section is to shed light on Canada’s history of the Indian Residential School system and the multi-generational impacts left behind.

In order to highlight the diversity and resiliency of Canadian people, we have also provided a brief introduction to four other historical injustices that have occurred in Canada: the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act, the Japanese-Canadian Internment, the Komagata Maru Incident, and the refusal of refugees from the Holocaust. Our goal here is not to compare one injustice to another, but instead to learn from each affected community and their path towards reconciliation.

The following sections have been adapted from the Reconciling Injustices in a Pluralistic Canada Discussion Guide by Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue.

Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act

Significant Chinese immigration to Canada began in 1858 in response to the gold rush in British Columbia (BC), increasing dramatically in 1881 with the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway into BC. When the railway was completed in 1885, BC coincidentally experienced an economic recession and high unemployment. Fear spread that the now unemployed Chinese workers would take jobs from the white labour force, and the BC government encouraged the Federal Government to halt further Chinese immigration.

The Government of Canada responded by implementing the Chinese Immigration Act / Exclusion Act, that required every Chinese worker or immigrant to pay a $50 head tax to enter Canada. In 1903, the tax was raised to $500, and in 1923, Canada passed a new Chinese Immigration Act that stopped Chinese immigration completely until the repeal of the act in

CHINESE HEAD TAX RECEIPT, 1918
PHOTO CREDIT: VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY #30625
1947. As a result, many Chinese immigrants experienced long separations from their families, and some were never reunited. It wasn’t until 1967 that Chinese immigrants were admitted under the same point system as immigrants from other nations.

Further Reading
UBC Chinese Canadian Stories: Uncommon Histories from a Common Past
http://chinesecanadian.ubc.ca

Japanese-Canadian Internment

Within days of the Japanese Government attacking Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, Canadian Pacific Railways fired most of its Japanese workers and the Canadian government seized Japanese fishing boats, forcing fishermen to stay in port. This persecution escalated on December 18, 1941 when Japanese Government forces attacked Hong Kong and imprisoned or killed many Canadian soldiers.

Canada’s senior military officials and the RCMP opposed action against Japanese-Canadians and believed this community posed no threat to the west coast of Canada. Still, a 100-mile wide strip on the west coast was designated a “restricted area” under the War Measures Act and all Japanese males between the ages of 18 and 45 were removed and sent to road camps in the interior of British Columbia. By March of 1942, all Japanese-Canadians were asked to leave the area and women and children were sent to live in holding facilities in livestock barns at Hastings Park.

In order to stay together, many families agreed to move to Alberta or Manitoba to fill labour shortages. In 1943, the confiscated property of interned Japanese-Canadians was sold to pay for their own internment, leaving most with little more than a suitcase of personal belongings. With the end of WWII, Japanese-Canadians were given a choice to move east of the Rockies or return to Japan to be repatriated. An estimated 4,000 Japanese-Canadians were exiled to Japan by 1946. It was not until April 1, 1949 that Japanese-Canadians were again allowed to freely move across Canada.

Further Reading
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Japanese Internment
http://cbc.ca/history/EPICONTENTSE1EP14CH39A3LE.html
Komagata Maru Incident

Canada’s Continuous Passage Act was enacted in 1908 in an effort to prevent immigration from India. The Act stated that immigrants must “come from the country of their birth, or citizenship, by a continuous journey and on through tickets purchased before leaving the country of their birth, or citizenship.” Additionally, if an Indian immigrant was able to make the continuous journey, he or she was required to have $200 on his or her person to enter British Columbia.

On May 23rd 1914, the Komagata Maru arrived near Vancouver’s present-day Stanley Park carrying 376 hopeful immigrants who had chartered the ship to sail from one port of the British Empire, Hong Kong, to another in Vancouver, Canada. Passengers, mostly from Punjab in British-occupied India, understood that their journey would act as a direct challenge to the Continuous Passage Act but asserted the right to free passage within the British Empire.

Upon the arrival of the Komagata Maru in Vancouver, the ship was met with hostility and resistance from Canadian authorities, who reiterated that the ship had not adhered to the Continuous Passage Act. Showing support for the Komagata Maru was the Khalsa Diwan Society, established in 1906, and other members from Vancouver’s South Asian community. These supporters helped provide relief to the passengers and raised money for provisions and legal aid. Two months passed while the ship stayed docked in Burrard Inlet until the court of appeal upheld the anti-Asian order-in-council.

Following a failed forceful attempt to remove the ship from the Inlet, the Prime Minister gave permission to allow the Royal Canadian Navy Rainbow to escort the Komagata Maru from the shores of BC.

Before that could happen, an agreement was reached where the government sent provisions to the ship in return for its voluntary deportation. The ship left Vancouver on July 23, 1914. Upon its return to Indian shores, the Komagata Maru was met by British officials and a confrontation occurred that left twenty passengers dead and many more injured.

Further Reading
Simon Fraser University, Komagata Maru: Continuing the Journey
http://komagatamarujourney.ca/incident
Refusal of Jewish Holocaust Refugees

In the first half of the 20th century, Canada carefully regulated the immigration of Jews and other minorities. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and anti-Semitic policies in Nazi Germany and Austria increased sharply. 1938 saw the destruction of Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues during the Nazi-organized Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass), a turning point for European Jews. That same year, Canada’s Director of Immigration, Frederick Blair, began tightening immigration policies. These regulations would become known as the infamous “none is too many” immigration policy for Jews.

In 1939, the M.S. St. Louis, carrying 937 passengers, mainly German-Jewish refugees, wasn’t permitted to enter Canadian waters due to the Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King’s rejection of their request for asylum, stating that this was not “Canada’s problem.” With that, the Jewish refugees returned to Europe where many perished in the Holocaust. By welcoming the Jewish refugees onboard the M.S. St. Louis, Canada could have made a strong statement against Hitler’s actions. Instead, Canada’s refusal confirmed the Nazi assumption that other countries did not care about Jews, and Canada became partially complicit in a genocide that would lead to the slaughter of six million Jews over the course of the Second World War. Between 1933 and 1939, the Canadian government accepted only 4,000 of the 800,000 Jewish refugees who escaped Nazi-controlled Europe.

Further Reading
Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, Enemy Aliens
http://enemyaliens.ca/accueil-home-eng.html
ELDER’S STATEMENT AND VISION

British Columbia, Canada

A SHARED TOMORROW.

We are Elders from Aboriginal and other ancient histories who care about Canadians and answered a call to action in November 2012. For two days, we gathered on the traditional territories of the Musqueam People to explore how Reconciliation, as a way of being, can help our society move forward. To that end we have made a video to explain who we are and invite you to join us on this path. Our purpose is to speak some truths about the trauma of Indian Residential Schools and other atrocities that have been imposed upon humans around the world. As Canadians, we share a responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured – a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal together, and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren.

How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings, we found that we are interconnected through the same mind and spirit. Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing, and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and restore dignity. We discovered that in all of our cultural traditions there are teachings about reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, healing and balance. We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth. With those ways of being in mind, join us in facing the challenge of healing Canada of its painful past so we can leave a better future for our children. With those ancient ways in our hearts and the future in our minds, let’s hold hands and walk together. In that spirit, we invite you to join in Reconciliation Canada’s initiatives.

Signed,

LARRY GRANT
Musqueam Elder.

ASHOK MATHUR
South Asian artist, writer, and cultural organizer; Director of the Centre for innovation in Culture and the Arts in Canada (CiCAC), Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC.

GRACE EIKO THOMSON
Japanese Canadian Historian and Curator; Former President, National Association of Japanese Canadians.

WINNIE L. CHEUNG
Director & Past President of the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society (VAHMS).

FARID ROHANI
Bahai; Chair of the Board, Laurier Institution.

ANDY YELLOWBACK
Cree Elder, Northern Manitoba.

BEVIE YELLOWBACK
BSW, RSW, Gitxsan First Nation Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society Resource Social Worker.

ROBBIE WAISMAN
Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society For Education and Remembrance.

LOUISE ROLSTON
Member of the United Church of Canada; Former Chancellor of Vancouver School of Theology.

DR. MARIE ANDERSON
BSW, MSW, PhD. Cooks Ferry Band, Nlakapmux Tribe; CEO Heywaynoqu Healing Circle For Addiction Society and CoDeveloper and Sessional Instructor Chemical Addictions Program, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

YVONNE RIGSBY-JONES
Snuneymuxw First Nation; Executive Director, Tsow-Tun Le Lum.

BARNEY WILLIAMS
Member of The Indian Residential School Survivors Committee for Truth and Reconciliation.

WILLIAM A. WHITE
BA History and Anthropology; Coast Salish Elder, Tsotwunleum Elder in Residence/Cultural Resource Worker; Principal Researcher Kwam Kwum Sulitst HIV AIDS Project Cowichan Tribes.

CHIEF DR. ROBERT JOSEPH
Gwawaenuk Elder; Ambassador, Reconciliation Canada; Indian Residential Schools Survivor Society.
RECONCILIATION BEGINS WITH ME

Used within many Aboriginal peoples across North America, the medicine wheel is a holistic way of exploring one’s own well-being.

If we see ourselves as the entire wheel, we notice there are several small pieces that make the whole. We need to nurture each piece to its fullest potential in order for the wheel to be in balance. If one piece is not tended to, the others suffer from over compensating for the lack of strength in the un-nurtured piece, causing the nurtured pieces to then become stressed and disproportionate to the whole.

At this time, through the lens of reconciliation, you are invited to search within your own life, your own medicine wheel, to see what parts of your being are nurtured and what parts need nurturing.

Please note there will be time allocated to completing this activity during the workshop.
COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION INITIATIVES IN ACTION

The Reconciliation Dialogue Workshops are designed to provide opportunities for community leaders to build meaningful partnerships, create synergies and identify collaboration opportunities that work towards building vibrant and sustainable communities for our shared future.

Over the past year, community leaders from across Vancouver gathered to build strong collaborative partnerships that laid the groundwork for a New Way Forward.

Below are some examples of how the diverse communities in Vancouver came together to promote and engage British Columbians in reconciliation initiatives.

- The City of Vancouver was the first municipality in Canada to proclaim June 21, 2013 to June 20, 2014 as the Year of Reconciliation

- The City of Vancouver invited community leaders to a Reconciliation Summit where Mayor Gregor Robertson presented the Year of Reconciliation proclamation to Chief Robert Joseph

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada hosted four Reconciliation Canada Dialogue Workshops for staff in their Vancouver office

- Community centers across the City of Vancouver organized Reconciliation Canada Lunch & Learns for staff in the lead up to Reconciliation Week

- Vancity organized a Reconciliation Canada lunch & learn for staff at their Vancouver office

- S.U.C.C.E.S.S. hosted a Reconciliation Dialogue Workshop to raise awareness of reconciliation initiatives within the Vancouver immigrant community

- The World Sikh Organization encouraged youth to express their thoughts and feelings about reconciliation through a creative video workshop

- Vancity organized a community social media round table to promote Reconciliation Week to key social media leaders in Vancouver

- Vancity encouraged staff to volunteer their time to support Reconciliation Canada as Knowledge Philanthropists in highly-skilled roles

- Union Gospel Mission seconded a staff member to Reconciliation Canada to help with logistics during Reconciliation Week
You will have an opportunity to discuss your ideas for reconciliation initiatives with other community leaders at the Reconciliation Dialogue Workshop.

As our list of success stories continues to grow, we encourage you to share your action plan ideas and initiatives with us to help inspire others. We will be in touch with a post-workshop evaluation within three months to follow up on the ideas and initiatives you have developed. Thank you for your commitment to reconciliation and building a New Way Forward.
TOP MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

MISCONCEPTION 1: HISTORY
The history of North America began with the arrival of Europeans to the shores of this continent.

FACTS
Long before the first explorers landed on the shores of the "New World", there were many different Indigenous nations living in various regions of what we now know as "Canada". Each nation had its own tribal customs, political organization, language, and spiritual beliefs, and had developed vast trade and economic systems. In fact, the advanced medical knowledge of the Iroquois people helped save the lives of many newcomers to North America.

There is a long history of this country prior to European arrival, and First Nations recorded it orally. The newcomers, however, set down their version of history in writing. It is only in recent years that mainstream Canadians are learning of the true history of First Nations and their contributions in building this country.

MISCONCEPTION 2: TERMINOLOGY
The terms "Aboriginal" and "Native" are used to define one homogenous group of people in Canada.

FACTS
The terms "Aboriginal", "Native" and "Indigenous" are used as general terms to collectively describe three distinct cultural groups known as the "Inuit", the "Metis" and "First Nations".

Each of the three groups has its own unique historical background, culture and political goals.

Within the group known as "First Nations" or "Indians", there are 633 First Nations bands, representing 52 nations or cultural groups and more than 50 languages. Each nation has its own spirituality, traditional political structure, and history. As a general rule, most individuals prefer to be referred to by the specific nation to which they belong (Blackfoot, Cree, Dene, etc.).

The term "Aboriginal" should be used only as an adjective to describe individuals or mixed groups of First Nations or Indians, Metis or Inuit people. It has been wrongly used by the news media as a noun, as in: "The Aboriginals are..." The proper usage is: "the Aboriginal peoples are...

MISCONCEPTION 3: RIGHTS AND BENEFITS
First Nations are the only peoples to have special rights and benefits above other Canadians.

FACTS
First Nations people enjoy the same fundamental benefits as all other Canadians, including Child Tax Benefit, Old Age Security and Employment Insurance.

Where Constitutionally-protected Aboriginal rights exist, First Nations people do have priority over others (for example, the right to hunt and fish for subsistence), but even these rights are subject to regulation.
Some registered Treaty Indians and Aboriginal people enrolled under comprehensive claim settlements also enjoy certain rights or benefits, including reserve lands, hunting and fishing rights, and payment of annuities (depending on the terms and conditions of their treaty agreement).

The government provides housing and post-secondary assistance to First Nations so that they may achieve the same standard of living as other Canadians.

Because of the division of powers in the Constitution, many services provided by provinces to other Canadians are provided to Indians living on-reserve by the federal government. Provincial standards are generally adopted, but there may be some local differences.

In Canada, the government also provides assistance to those people who cannot afford housing, medical aid and social assistance. As well, a tax rebate is given to low income families.

Foreign diplomats to Canada are able to take advantage of the provincial sales tax exemption, and other benefits as a special group of people living within Canada's borders.

**CONCESSION 4: CONDITIONS IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

First Nations peoples are better off than most Canadians.

**FACTS**

Although each year the United Nations ranks Canada among the best places in the world to live, the fact remains that many First Nations people in Canada still live in conditions that fall far short of the basic standards most Canadians have come to expect.

Statistics from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples final report revealed:

- participation rate by Aboriginal peoples in labour force (57%) was below that of all Canadians (68%).
- earned income per employed Aboriginal person in 1991 was $14,561 compared to $24,001 for all Canadians, and declined by 1,000 over the decade 1981 to 1991.
- 19% of inmates in federal penal institutions are Aboriginal people (rising to 49% in Manitoba and 72% in Saskatchewan provincial institutions).
- tuberculosis and diabetes are respectively 17 times and 3 times higher among Aboriginal peoples.

While no database dealing specifically with suicide rates among Aboriginal people and First Nations is currently available in Canada, according to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, suicide rate within First Nations and Inuit communities is much higher than in the Canadian population. It could be from two to seven times more frequent.

In 1996, the general infant mortality rate was 6.1 deaths for 1000 births within the Canadian population, compared to 11.6 for First Nations.

That same year, 1.7% of all housing units in Canada were occupied by more than one person per room, compared to 18.6% in First Nations communities.

According to a study conducted by Health Canada in 1997 on drinking water safety in First Nations communities, at least 171 water systems out of 863, that is 20%, could be a threat to human health.

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2. STATISTIQUE CANADA. 1996 Census.
**MISCONCEPTION 5: TAXATION**

*All Aboriginal peoples are tax exempt.*

**FACTS**

Inuit, Metis, and non-status Indians are required to pay tax.

The origin of tax exemption for registered Indians is found under sections 87 and 90 of the *Indian Act*.

Income earned by registered Indians working on-reserve for a company which is located on-reserve are exempted from federal and provincial income taxes.

Generally, First Nation individuals must pay income tax if they work off-reserve or for a company located off reserve whose business is not specifically geared toward Aboriginal people.

Depending on the province, some registered Indians do not pay provincial sales tax. Even within a province, there is often uneven application of this right.

Registered Indians do not have to pay the GST on goods delivered to the reserve. If the goods are purchased off-reserve and not delivered to the reserve, the GST must be paid.

**MISCONCEPTION 6: FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

*First Nations are incapable of administering their own finances.*

**FACTS**

Every First Nation in Canada is required to submit an annual audit to the federal government before receiving next year’s funding. Significant improvements in financial management systems have been made:

- 83% of First Nations have fully met federal audit requirements (61% submit their audits within 120 days).
- 15% of First Nations with federally approved audits require remedial management in some problem areas.
- 2% of First Nations who have received qualified audits are considered to be experiencing severe financial problems.

First Nations are improving their financial administration capabilities through a number of local and national initiatives. Some of the national initiatives include:

- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding on March 30, 1998 between the Assembly of First Nations and the Certified General Accountants’ Association of Canada (CGA -Canada).
- The development of the First Nation Financial Management Board (FMB). One of four fiscal institutions being developed by First Nations, the FMB is a First Nation led response to concerns about First Nation financial management systems and accountability. It is intended to be a long term solution to First Nation capacity development and not a quick legislative fix.
- The FMB will act as a financial management service institution for First Nation governments and institutions. It will work with First Nations to develop a financial management policy framework, develop best practices and certify First Nation financial management systems as requested.
MISCONCEPTION 7: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Because of the remote location of many First Nations communities, economic development is non-existent on reserves and there are few Aboriginal businesses.

FACTS
Recent statistics from Industry Canada revealed that there are over 20,000 Aboriginal businesses in Canada active in every sector of the economy.

The Aboriginal Business Survey of 723 Aboriginal businesses conducted by Aboriginal Business Canada and Statistics Canada in 1996, found that:

- Over 20,000 Aboriginal people have been identified as owning a business.
- The majority of Aboriginal businesses are owned solely; are owned by North American Indians; and are twice as likely to be owned by men than women.
- Only 3.9% of all Aboriginal adults (over 15 years) own a business versus the Canadian average of 7.9%.
- 70% of Aboriginal businesses surveyed were full-time operations, while the remainder were seasonal.
- 57% of Aboriginal businesses are located on-reserve.

Many are located in First Nations communities and have brought increased employment as a result of joint business ventures with non-Aboriginal companies.

The Assembly of First Nations, through its Economic Development Secretariat is working in partnership with the federal government to increase economic development opportunities in all First Nations communities.

Economic development on remote reserves is not based on location – as many First Nations communities have witnessed large non-Native companies removing the natural resources from their areas for many years.

Businesses are needed to create economies, and start-up capital is needed in order to create a business.

Under ordinary circumstances a businessperson could go to a local bank and get a loan to purchase the necessary equipment and assets. Not so for First Nations people living on-reserve.

Section 89 of the Indian Act, which was supposed to protect First Nations land from seizure, paradoxically prohibits First Nations land from being mortgaged. It prevents First Nations people living on-reserve from using their land as collateral.

MISCONCEPTION 8: LIVING CONDITIONS
All First Nations communities face living conditions similar to those of third world countries.

FACTS
No two communities are the same. There are many factors that determine the standard of living and level of economic development in First Nations communities.

Work with First Nations leaders to improve living conditions on-reserve continues to bring the standard of living up to par with the rest of Canadians. First Nations are working to increase their land-base and are seeking fair and equitable access to resources. The total accumulated size of all Indian reserve land south of 60 in Canada (2,676,469.9 hectares) would fit into the great Navajo reservation (6,477,732.8 hectares) in the United States.
**MISCONCEPTION 9: SELF-GOVERNMENT**

*First Nations are not ready for self-government.*

**FACTS**

The Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Confederacy) existed since the beginning of time as distinct people with their own laws and customs, territories, political organization and economy. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, the fathers of the US confederation, were so impressed with the Great Law of Peace which the Six Nations Confederacy followed that they used it as a model for the United States Constitution.

Some First Nations were operating under various systems of self-government before the Inherent Right of Self-Government policy was announced in 1995 (including, the Sechelt Band’s *Self-Government Act* in BC, Cree-Naskapi [of Quebec] and the Yukon Self-Government Act).

**MISCONCEPTION 10: HOUSING AND EDUCATION**

*All Aboriginal people receive free housing and post-secondary education.*

**FACTS**

Métis and non-Status Indians do not receive free housing or education assistance.

Housing and education are important legal benefits of some treaties for Treaty First Nations.

Under DIAND’s on-reserve housing policy, Status Indians living on-reserve obtain funds through their band councils to build or renovate their homes. In many cases they repay these loans over a number of years.

Low income non-Aboriginal families in various regions of Canada seeking housing assistance from governments may also receive assistance through various programs offered by the federal and provincial governments.

DIAND provides elementary education assistance for on-reserve status Indians, and post-secondary education assistance to Inuit and Status Indians to help improve their standard of living.

While Status Indian students receive post-secondary assistance through their band councils, they can also receive provincial financial assistance in the form of grants or loans that must be repaid.

Federal funding for post-secondary education has remained the same since 1987, except for the 2 to 3% increase per year approved by the Treasury Board. At the same time, the number of Inuit and Status Indians applying is up and tuition fees keep rising, so fewer and fewer students access education funding.

**MISCONCEPTION 11: LAND CLAIMS**

*Aboriginal land claims are settled by government based on political guilt over past injustices committed against the original inhabitants in Canada.*

**FACTS**

Land claims are based on outstanding legal obligations to the original inhabitants of this land, and on the basic principle of British common law that there can be no confiscation of land without compensation.

In some areas of Canada, the question of Aboriginal land title has not been addressed.

Land claims are well researched and subject to validation by the federal government and Department of Justice before any negotiations towards settlement can begin.

Treaties and other agreements provided that land would be set aside for First Nations communities. Over the years, land was improperly confiscated from First Nations. First Nations were forcibly relocated from their original location to other areas, and were subject to various other improper and illegal treatment by the Crown.
The settlement agreement of each land claim is based on existing outstanding legal obligations of the federal and/or provincial or territorial governments. Compensation and other settlement issues are based on individual land claims.

These longstanding debts to First Nations must be paid if Canada hopes to clear its obligations to the original landowners of this country and render a debt-free country for future generations.

The rights of non-Aboriginal landowners are always considered in the negotiation of any resolution to First Nations communities outstanding land claims.

**Misconception 12: Dependency**

*First Nations are living at Canada’s expense.*

**Facts**

The country was built on lands and resources that belong to the First Nations and, in theory, one could argue that Canada is living at First Nations’ expense. Canada’s economic production would not have reached its present-day scale if the Government had not seized the resources and ancestral lands of the First Nations.

In recent years, First Nations have been urging the government to implement the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ recommendation for the redistribution of land and resources between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, therefore allowing First Nations to become self-sufficient again.

The ancestors of First Nations citizens agreed to share part of their territory and resources with the non-Aboriginal arrivals. To that end, they reached nation-to-nation agreements.

Over the years, First Nations citizens have also made valuable contributions to Canada. Although military service for First Nations is voluntary, many of them willingly enlisted in the Canadian Armed forces and participated in various conflicts to fight racism and discrimination.
Statement of Apology - to former students of Indian Residential Schools

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some said, as it was infamously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child'. Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we underestimated the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

June 11, 2008

On behalf of the Government of Canada
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper,
Prime Minister of Canada.
Reconciliation Canada is leading the way in engaging Canadians in dialogue that revitalizes the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians – relationships built on a foundation of openness, dignity, understanding and hope.

Reconciliation Canada is a charitable project established as a collaboration between the Indian Residential School Survivor’s Society (IRSSS) and Tides Canada Initiatives Society (TCI).

Reconciliation Canada is an Aboriginal-led, culturally diverse, nonpartisan community-based initiative. Our model for reconciliation engages people in open and honest conversation to understand our diverse histories and experiences. We actively engage multi-faith and multi-cultural communities to explore the meaning of reconciliation and discover each of our community’s unique strengths in order to create meaningful partnerships. Together, we are charting a New Way Forward.

Reconciliation Canada is strengthening our foundation for a future that is filled with vibrant, resilient and sustainable communities. Our initiatives promote an environment that fosters right relations and relevant opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians to achieve their optimum potential. Our initiatives include:

**Reconciliation Dialogue Sessions & Action Plans**
Reconciliation Dialogues build relationships and a shared understanding of our collective history with the outcome of developing concrete reconciliation plans to build stronger, more resilient families and communities. Over 100 workshops will be planned in partnership with the First Nations Leadership Council, BC Aboriginal Friendship Centres, municipal governments and faith-based organizations across the BC. Similar workshops are being planned across Canada.

**Reconciliation-Based Leadership Training & Core Competencies Assessments**
A form of values-based leadership targeting existing and emerging youth, community and organization leaders to promote community-based reconciliation processes in their respective environments.

**Sustainable Economic Reconciliation Dialogue Sessions & Action Plans**
Stakeholders will come together for dialogue to explore the formation of meaningful partnerships. These workshops will serve as a foundation for the collaborative development of sustainable Economic Reconciliation Action Plans that provide mutually beneficial economic opportunities for all parties.

**Public Awareness**
Public awareness and interactive community outreach activities to promote a shared understanding of our collective history.
Reconciliation Week 2013 - A Success Story

Through the development of meaningful partnerships with community organizations, industry leaders, faith-based groups and government, Reconciliation Canada held a series of initiatives in British Columbia that began with Reconciliation Dialogue Workshops and Community Outreach throughout British Columbia leading up to the historic Reconciliation Week in September 2013. These efforts resulted in partnership interest and media coverage across the country.

During Reconciliation Week, we held three major events engaging over 50,000 Canadians that included:

Lighting the Flame of Reconciliation Ceremony – a sacred fire ceremony on Squamish Nation territory symbolized the commencement of Reconciliation Week activities.

All Nations Canoe Gathering – 60 traditional canoes and vessels with international representation paddled together from Kits Point to False Creek in Vancouver for a traditional welcome ceremony. This was the first time an event of this kind had been held in a major city in Canada.

Walk for Reconciliation – Tens of thousands of people came together for Canada’s first ever Walk for Reconciliation to display their support and desire to build a new way forward together. Dr. Bernice King provided the keynote address. This event was voted as the #2 Top Newsmaker of 2013 by CBC News Vancouver.

These initiatives represent the beginning of a new way forward in our relationships. Reconciliation is a long and complex journey and will require ongoing action to build a better and stronger Canada for everyone.

To learn more about the initiatives of Reconciliation Canada, please visit www.reconciliationcanada.ca.

“Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”
~ Chief Dr. Robert Joseph

Join us in building a new way forward.
Contact us at:
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